

Consultation on the Rushcliffe Local Plan Part 2: Land and Planning Policies:

**Response from
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on behalf of Pedals (Nottingham Cycling Campaign)**

This response is in two sections:-

- a) Submission in support of the proposed foot-cycle bridge between Trent Lane and The Hook (Lady Bay)**
- b) Other cycling schemes in Rushcliffe Borough, with a particular emphasis on the West Bridgford area**

- a) Submission in support of the proposed foot-cycle bridge between Trent Lane and The Hook (Lady Bay)**

Introduction

The idea of a foot-cycle bridge across the Trent east of Trent Bridge and Lady Bay Bridge originated in the proposals by Nottingham City Council in 1998 for such a bridge between Colwick Park and Holme Pierrepont. Even though these proposals were refused planning permission by Rushcliffe Borough Council, after objections from the Nottingham Sailing Club, and then dropped, interest in the idea of such a bridge somewhere east of the two road bridges has remained widespread.

Proposals for a foot-cycle bridge further west, connecting the south end of Trent Lane to The Hook on the Lady Bay (West Bridgford) side, formed part of the EDAW Master Plan for the comprehensive regeneration of the Waterside area in 2005, commissioned by the City Council. In their internal study, they carried out some detailed and still highly relevant work on bridge at this new location, only slightly to the west of the site we now propose.

Although, with the onset of the recession and the abandonment of the wider regeneration plans, the proposal was not pursued, strong interest has remained, and a schematic drawing of a bridge at this point was included in the City Council's submission in 2015 the MIPIM conference in Cannes.

This inclusion made clear that the City Council still recognised the importance of attracting inward investment to further the progress of the Riverside Regeneration, all the way to Trent Bridge, by investing in infrastructure such as this proposed bridge, particularly in view of the proximity of the site to many other developments, on both north and south banks of the Trent. These include the first phase of the Blueprint Waterside Trent Basin major housing scheme, on which work started in 2015, part of a planned much larger development over the next few years west of Trent Lane.

This development is to be followed by several others, east of Trent Lane, including a major housing scheme by McCann Developments on the Merrill Brown and Park Yacht Club sites. Both of these developments will include further sections of the riverside path on the north bank of the Trent between Colwick Park and the Meadow Lane Canal Lock, to be followed by other such stretches on the new housing sites west of Lady Bay Bridge, including the site east of the Canal Lock, for which planning consent was granted in 2015.

These riverside path extensions will add greatly to the accessibility of the proposed foot-cycle bridge on the north bank. This will also benefit greatly from the improved cycling provision on Daleside Road, due to be carried out in 2016-17 by the City Council as part of the DfT-funded Cycling Ambition Grant Eastern Corridor scheme (mentioned in paras 4.211 and 4.2.12 of the City Local Plan Transport Background Paper, January 2016). This will greatly improve access from the bridge to the City Centre and other major employment areas.

Bridge accessibility will also be enhanced by its proximity to the Sneinton Greenway, where surface improvements have recently been carried out, and also by the potential new links incorporated in the

regeneration of the Island Site between Manvers Street (Sneinton) and London Road. These will be of great benefit in improving access between the proposed bridge and the south side of the City Centre, and also Nottingham Station, with its expanded secure bike parking provision and other recent major improvements, including the exclusion of through traffic from Station Street. All these developments over the next few years will be of great value in adding to the cycle network in this area and encouraging high levels of usage for the bridge, both by cyclists and pedestrians, and for both commuting and leisure purposes.

Further access improvements could also connect to other important leisure attractions such as the Grantham Canal (towpath) south of the Trent and the new Gedling Country Park on the north side of the river, which includes a series of paths for walkers and cyclists. On the western side of Nottingham the north bank riverside path would also connect the bridge directly with other important routes such as the Erewash Valley Trail and the Broxtowe Country Trail, as well as other Sustrans NCN Routes such as Route 6 and Route 67, etc. This will extend further the scope of the very popular 14km Big Track route, between the Suspension Bridge and Beeston Lock, developed over the last 10 years and including canalside and riverside paths.

The wider developments should ensure the very good connectivity of the proposed bridge, a factor that we know is essential to the success of such projects, such as the Diglis bridge over the River Severn in Worcester, built in 2010 by Worcestershire County and Worcester City Councils under the Sustrans-promoted and Peoples' Lottery-funded Connect 2 Project, whose experience we have studied in detail.

We also see our proposed bridge is being of great strategic value in providing much safer and more pleasant connections to and from areas south of the Trent. These included the existing urban area of West Bridgford but also the major new housing and employment areas east and south of West Bridgford proposed by Rushcliffe Borough Council for development by 2028, and particularly including the area between East of Gamston and North of Tollerton (c1500 homes by 2028, and up to 1500 homes post 2028, together with c20 hectares of employment development).

The proposed bridge will also benefit people living in the new housing areas south of West Bridgford (Melton Road, Edwalton), with the plans for the development of 3000 new homes and 4 hectares of new employment development), according to the Rushcliffe Local Plan Core Strategy, January 2016, particularly if the current links can be extended and upgraded.

The proposed bridge will help these areas to benefit greatly, both for access for commuting purposes, to centres of employment in Nottingham, and also for access for leisure purposes, particularly including trips by bike and on foot to and from the major Country Parks on this side of Greater Nottingham, i.e. Colwick Park and Holme Pierrepont. Access to and from Colwick Woods will also be improved, as well as opportunities for wider enjoyment of the whole riverside area through Nottingham, with extra potential for circular trips, in addition to those now afforded by the Wilford Suspension Bridge and Wilford Toll Bridge non-motorised user routes.

A bridge at this site would also promote accessibility to local community facilities and businesses in Lady Bay and West Bridgford town centre by bike and on foot, adding to the economic benefits.

These extra opportunities from such a bridge would also benefit runners, and be useful as part of major events such as the Robin Hood Marathon and the Great Nottinghamshire Bike Ride / Cycle Live, as well as other events such as Triathlons, all with further major health promotion benefits.

Also important in terms of the south bank is the status of the existing riverside path (between Wilford and the Water Sports Centre etc.) as part both of the Trent Valley Way long distance walking route and as part of Route 15 of the Sustrans National Cycle Network, with their wider regional and national links.

We have already been in contact with the Environment Agency to obtain their advice and they have no objection to our proposed site, subject to further detailed discussions. We have also been in contact with the Nottingham Sailing Club and are confident that our proposed site is much more

acceptable to them than that first proposed, again subject to further discussions as our plans progress.

Provision of a new foot-cycle bridge at the site we propose will generally be of great benefit for active travel, with many public health benefits. Experience of successful such bridges elsewhere, e.g. the Diglis Bridge over the River Severn in Worcester, where usage is about 15 times the levels predicted, shows how popular such new links can be.

This is partly because of a 'wow factor' associated with a well-sited and well-designed new bridge. We consider that this is one reason why, particularly with improved links on both sides of the Trent, a new bridge would be that much more popular, with most walkers and cyclists, than any other scheme such as providing wider cantilevered paths on one or both sides of Lady Bay Bridge, as studied in a feasibility study by Whitgift Consulting for the City and County Councils in 2005. Although improvements to make the bridge better for cyclists and pedestrians would in principle be welcome, providing safe and convenient approaches to this site would also be that much more difficult, and this would deter less-confident cyclists in particular. This is one reason why, while not objecting to Lady Bay bridge scheme, we consider our proposed new bridge site to be superior, with the best overall advantages, for walkers and cyclists, and for both leisure and commuting / utility trips.

Another very important advantage of such a new link would be to help both walkers and cyclists avoid the very busy and intimidating conditions on nearby road bridges such as Trent Bridge and Lady Bay Bridge. Fear of such heavy traffic conditions is major deterrent to greater use of bikes. Currently there is no safe and pleasant way for cyclists and walkers to cross the River Trent anywhere east of Trent Bridge until Newark, unlike the situation west of Trent Bridge where both the Wilford Suspension Bridge and the Wilford Toll Bridge (with its tramside shared path) are located, both very well-used facilities and offering scope for a variety of circular trips as well as direct trips from A to B.

Both Trent Bridge and Lady Bay Bridge also suffer from very high levels of poor air pollution, mostly generated by motor traffic and an issue of steadily growing public concern because of the increased evidence of its very serious health effects. This affects the main approaches as well as the bridges themselves and needs urgent action by a range of measures, especially since Nottingham was recently criticised by Defra as being one of the 5 worst cities in England for air pollution, most of which derives from traffic. Addressing this serious public health issue is another very strong reason to encourage cycling and walking, and not just rely on cleaner fuels and cleaner engines in buses and other motor vehicles.

Relevance to the Rushcliffe Local Plan

In Part 1 (Core Strategy) Policy 15: Transport Infrastructure Priorities, while not including the proposed bridge as a specific commitment, did contain a number of statements that we consider to be very relevant to the case we are proposing. These included these statements (with some sections in bold italics to emphasise their particular relevance)

2. New development, singly or in combination with other proposed development, must include a sufficient package of measures to ensure that journeys by non-private car modes are encouraged, and that residual car trips will not severely impact on the wider transport system in terms of its effective operations.

6. Further transport infrastructure schemes are likely to emerge through Local Transport Plan reviews, the Highways Agency Route Based Strategy process and the Local Plan Part 2 (Land and Planning Policies).

The feasibility study for our proposed bridge, on which we started work in 2015 in close cooperation with the County Council and City Council, is in effect a review of non-motorised links across the Trent between Nottingham and the West Bridgford area part of Rushcliffe Borough, but also very much related to the wider strategic context of major new housing and employment developments on both sides of the Trent, and therefore the strategic importance of creating such a new link at the site we are proposing. Because of the strategic importance of the proposal we thought it very important to

take the opportunities to make detailed submissions to both the City of Nottingham and Rushcliffe Local Plan consultations, while we continue in the next few months to finalise our revised feasibility study, in cooperation with Sustrans as well as the two Local Highway Authorities.

The object of this Study is both to explain in detail the case for a foot-cycle bridge across the Trent somewhere east of Trent Bridge and then to argue the case for our proposed site (between Trent Lane and The Hook, Lady Bay) as the site with the best overall advantages, for walkers and cyclists, and for leisure and commuting use, out of 4 theoretically possible sites in this area. These are analysed in detailed SWOT analyses for each site, and including the feasibility of a series of options for providing wider or new cantilevered paths on one or both sides of Lady Bay Bridge, the subject of a feasibility study in 2005 by Whitbybird Consulting for the City and County Councils, which has not been followed up and acted on.

In Local Plan Part 2: Land and Planning Policies, we note that relatively little is included about transport policies. However, in Section 13 on Transport (p75) we are pleased to see the inclusion of the relevant statements on General Transport Policy from the National Planning Policy Framework, and its tests related to accessibility, highway safety and sustainable transport systems, which are again very relevant to the project we propose.

In response to Question 71 on page 75 'Do you agree that no further transport policy is required in the LAPP?' we would like to respond 'No' and to propose that a policy in support in principle of our proposed bridge is included.

The strategic importance of this bridge is made clear also by Figure 1 (p7): Core Strategy Strategic Allocations adjacent to the Main Urban Area', especially the major site east of Gamston / North of Tollerton, with allocation of land for around 2500 homes up to 2028, up to a further 1500 homes post 2028 and around 20 hectares of employment land. The new bridge would be part of a very useful route for cyclists between this area and the centre of Nottingham (and other major employment areas within a reasonable cycling distance, e.g. 5km, north of the Trent), particularly if routes to and from it could be upgraded, as funding permits.

We also consider that the bridge would be of significant benefit to people living in the 1500 homes in major new housing to be developed south of West Bridgford in the Melton Road / Edwalton area. There are already some links to and from this area around the flatter east (Edwalton and Gamston) side of West Bridgford, and Highways England are considering including new cycling provision on the west side of the A52 Gamston-Lings Bar Road which would help to improve this and encourage further cycling to and from this area, including the 4 hectares of new employment generating development.

b) Other cycling schemes in Rushcliffe Borough, with a particular emphasis on the West Bridgford area

To help examine the adequacy of existing strategic and other links for cyclists in the West Bridgford area, including routes to and from the proposed bridge site, and to assess the scope for adding to and improving these, Pedals in April 2015, in close consultation with Paul Hillier of Nottinghamshire County Council, carried out a complete revision of the longstanding Pedals 'wish list' for Rushcliffe Borough (focusing on the West Bridgford area), and which is attached to this submission.

We are very pleased to learn that, in response to the recent consultation on their Draft Cycling Strategy in the Autumn of 2015, Nottinghamshire County Council are now proposing in their Draft Action Plan to concentrate on investing in, and encouraging other agencies to invest in, cycling improvements in the West Bridgford area, to increase the prospect of making more impact from such investment. This should help both to encourage higher levels of cycling in the area generally and the further popularity of our proposed bridge in particular, through new and improved routes south of the Trent in the vicinity of the bridge, complementing those already being developed or proposed north of the Trent.

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